

CHOOSING POLICING AS A CAREER:  
AN EXAMINATION OF MALE AND  
FEMALE OFFICER ATTITUDES

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## I. INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

Law enforcement is a career that includes many different areas of expertise such as patrol, communications, investigations, and reconstruction. The patrol officer is the foundation upon which each of the other specialties builds their cases and generally gains the individuals to fill these upper level departmental positions. Most higher positions are filled by rank and file police officers from the streets who have worked their way up the ladder to gain these 'prestigious' positions. Looking at the patrol officer can thus give some degree of insight as to what the rest of a department consists of in terms of personnel and attitudes.

Little investigation has been done in looking at the patrol officer and the reasons an individual in this role would choose to enter policing as a career. This research will look at this issue through past studies and literature on the topic as well as utilizing its own survey instrument for comparison. The reasons which motivate a person to enter a career in policing are believed to be important in terms of working relationships within a department. Similarities and differences will provide for a close examination of the homogeneous and heterogeneous makeup for a department.

This research was conducted around three very simple policing questions which were felt to be important to women

in policing. These were:

1. Do the reasons given for choosing a career in policing differ with the sex of the respondent?
2. Do the perceived reasons men enter policing differ with the sex of the respondent?
3. Do the perceived reasons women enter policing differ with the sex of the respondent?

Stated more directly, the purpose of this study was to examine the individual reasons males and females give for entering a career in policing as well as the perceived reasons of both males and females for other individuals to enter the profession. It is believed that males and females will differ in their reasons for entering policing as well as their perceived ideas of why others enter policing. Similarities will undoubtedly occur as well but are not believed to exist at the high percentages expected for the differences.

Reasons each individual indicates as being important for his/her career choice in law enforcement will be compared between male and female respondents already working with in the field. Along with this, perceived reasons males enter policing and females enter policing will be examined. Comparison between the male and female responses will help to illustrate the dynamics under which females must operate when working in the field as patrol officers. An examination of this nature will allow the researcher to look at past stereotypes of why females enter policing and compare those to current beliefs held by both males and females. The convergence or divergence of this information will be of great interest.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### HISTORY OF WOMEN IN POLICING

The history of women in Law enforcement is one that does not closely mirror the history of the profession as a whole. It is commonly viewed that in the United States, women were introduced into policing during the decade of the 1840's. The first female officers were employed to work with run-away children and female victims of crimes and female offenders. Women were not viewed as regular police officers but, rather, were seen as volunteers, substitute mother-figures, and clerical workers for police organizations (Folley, 1980). It was not until 1910 that the first regular policewoman was appointed to a police department when Alice Wells was commissioned a Los Angeles police officer. Even though her duties were restricted to supervision and enforcement of Laws pertaining to women and juveniles, Wells became a pioneer in the national movement to employ women as police officers (Sulton and Townsey, 1981). Wells' public appearances and speeches not only in this country but around the world helped to open the door of the Law enforcement profession to women. By the year 1916, female police officers could be found in police departments in 20 states and in several foreign countries (Horne, 1975).

Yet, through this early history, women were largely confined to duties such as working with children, working with

women in prison, or serving in women's bureaus. It was a basic understanding that the presence of women in law enforcement agencies was "tolerated" only because of their ability to deal with women and children. No other need for their services was viewed as existing in the male-dominated profession.

Male officers, during this era, tended to view the appearance of female officers as a "fad" that would soon pass. The male officers viewed females as trying to accomplish the tasks of social workers in a male-dominated occupation in which the expertise of social worker was unnecessary (Horne, 1975). It was commonly felt that women would soon tire of trying to compete with their male counterparts and would then withdraw from the profession. The realization, all but in some instances a reluctant realization, came about, however, that women were going to become and remain integral parts of the law enforcement profession.

With the increasing pressure of the female population in the areas of equal rights and the developing legal regulations regarding employment, the moves for the employment of female police officers were sustained. Legislative action such as the Equal Pay Act of 1963, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1963, and Revenue Sharing Act of 1972 served, along with other national and state legislation, to reinforce the growth and advancement of women in the traditionally male dominated profession of policing (Townsey, 1982). The gains for women in the criminal justice system were still highly exaggerated. Most existed in the new legislation itself but not



as a reality for women seeking employment in the profession. This is also an unpleasant fact for women seeking employment in law enforcement today (Feinman, 1980).

The most recent advancement in the area of women in policing and perhaps the most influential, has been the assignment of women to the line operations of law enforcement. In 1968, the first two female officers were assigned to general patrol work in the Indianapolis (Indiana) Police Department (Armat, 1974). These two officers began duty with no training and had to learn the routine of police patrol work through trial and error. These two officers encountered considerable discouragement from their male counterparts but did not give into the attempts to dissuade their continuation in the patrol positions.

Harrassment and prejudice are both factors affecting women in policing, today as in the past. At the level of patrol officers, the positions for years reserved as an "all male" occupation, the resistance is the strongest. It is commonly believed that women should be placed in those aspects of policing that are best served by their abilities---dealing with female offenders and juveniles---and leave the real police work to male officers. Despite women having shown that they are capable of performing the tasks of the patrol officer, there are still critical problems facing women entering the line operations of policing. As observed:

"Women have found ingress into the ranks of policing difficult, support for their continued existence lacking, and they have found themselves frequently confronted with skepticism from within the

police ranks regarding their ability to perform the road patrol functions satisfactorily (Charles, 1982)."

Whether the issue is acceptability of women to perform the tasks of the patrol officer or whether they can actually perform such duties is no longer of critical concern; there is little choice as women do and most likely will continue to be assigned such duties. Despite the presence of women in such positions, there is still some way to go if women are to achieve equal status in such positions as the employment data and statistics demonstrate (Price and Gavin, 1979). It is not likely that even the relatively small numbers of females in line police positions will be discouraged to the point of leaving.

### ATTITUDES OF MALE AND FEMALE OFFICERS

Working as a patrol officer within a police agency subjects women to criticism from male officers. Stereotypical beliefs and attitudes surrounding women officers are given the opportunity to expand, often out of proportion. It is almost inevitable that these attitudes would impact the manner in which female officers perform in the role of patrol officer (Muro, 1979). There exists a strong sentiment that many of the problems faced by women entering policing as an occupation center on two basic issues: (1) male officer attitudes regarding women officers, and (2) the manner in which female officers view their own role. Each of these areas tends to have major impact on the success, or failure, of women in law enforcement.

Females are typically viewed as being less competent and too weak to perform the tasks of the patrol officer (Gross, 1972). Initially, when a woman enters patrol work, she is perceived as "new territory", subject to the testing of other officers until she is able to prove her capabilities in the field. To overcome this image of being a "camp-follower," the female officer must prove that she is capable of carrying out the tasks and duties of the patrol officer. This is similar in nature to the testing of any new officer, male or female. Yet, the female officer must

also prove that her prime interest is in becoming a good law enforcement officer and not in using the job as an opportunity to meet men (Masters and Rasmussen, 1983). The attempt to identify sexual motives for women who become police officers is common and thus sexual harrassment may become a major part of the work environment that greets the female officer.

For a female, patrol work means dealing with not only crime, social destruction, and the host of situations that confront the patrol officer in the performance of duties, but the female officer must also deal with the sterotypical images that many persons, both male and female hold of the female police officer. Being a patrol officer and performing all the roles and duties which that position entails, challenges many deep-rooted ideas concerning what it means to be a female and a woman (Dreifus, 1980). It is difficult for the public to separate the idea of the shy, reserved, passive and submissive female from the sometimes rough, forceful image needed in the position of the patrol officer. Women entering policing are often viewed as trying to be a male in a female body (Milton, 1974). Many male officers hold this belief and it serves as a viable reason on their part for the nonacceptance of females in the police profession. With the need to develop strong working relationships with one's colleagues in law enforcement, it can be seen how the female officer sees her job as a constant struggle (Kinnane, 1979).

Due to the lack of confidence in women officers and their ability to perform the tasks of policing, many male officers, even those with experience with female officers in the work setting, do not trust female officers to the extent they do male officers (Johns and Barclay, 1979). Faith and trust in partners and other work associates is a crucial aspect of the police work environment. This lack of trust once again places strains on the female officer causing yet another obstacle to be overcome if she is to succeed in the profession.

Males are not alone in the skepticism in the acceptability of females in law enforcement. Females often have the same difficulties in accepting the place of women in the patrol role. Females are commonly divided between the traditional view of female behavior and the perceptions of the requirements for surviving in a male dominated profession. Women frequently experience conflict in viewing those values they have been taught since birth and those they perceive as necessary to perform the tasks of the patrol officer. It is not uncommon for a female officer to sacrifice positive personal qualities in order to gain acceptance by male officers (Gross, 1984; Martin, 1979). With one of the justifications for the employment of female officers being the hope that their perceptions, attitudes and personal traits could benefit the police mission, a dilemma is created. Women are sometimes forced to forego these traits and qualities in order to survive and gain acceptance in the police profession.

Women often have a hard time accepting women in the position of the patrol officer. Female officers talk highly of increased presence of women in the ranks of policing, yet when such increases do occur, female officers may be among the most resentful of the new female officers. The new female officer may be viewed as an intruder and must thus prove herself to the female and male officers. It becomes obvious that the female officer encounters opposition from both sexes when attempting to gain acceptance into the occupation.

### WHY BECOME A POLICE OFFICER

After reviewing the resistance to females in the ranks of the law enforcement profession, one ponders the motivation of women to enter the occupation. Males and female officers express sometimes varying sentiments as to why females seek policing as a career. These sentiments are quite often at odds with one another and thus create a confusing array of justifications for women choosing policing as a career. In examining the entry and persistence of women in the ranks of law enforcement, the key becomes establishing some understanding of the convergence and divergence of the views expressed by males and females as to why women enter the profession. It has been demonstrated that male and female officers express variable reasons for their career choices (Lester, 1983). There are indications that women enter law enforcement in search of variety of work assignments, the nature of the work, and salary considerations. Women do not tend to enter policing for any perceived power or prestige that is associated with the profession (Powers, 1983).

Policing is frequently viewed as an occupation that provides the practitioner with an "adventure" that allows one to broaden his or her life experiences and to participate in a profession that few individuals will have the

opportunity to experience. These factors seem to add to the desirability or the attractiveness of the position as does the opportunity to perform a useful service for the community (Milton, 1974). The police role permits the female officer to exercise her hand in compelling the police department to be more aware of the needs of women and to yield special consideration to females demanding and receiving the services of the police.

One of the more influential driving forces in the career choices of female officers relates to job security and financial consideration. It has been determined that beginning salaries for female police officers were higher than most other entry level salaries for positions generally occupied by women (Ermer, 1978). While this difference in salary levels may have changed somewhat since Ermer's study, there is still the belief that policing provides financial benefits better than many other positions.

Of interest is the fact that the reasons expressed by both male and female officers for the selection of a career do not differ dramatically. Both males and females express the desire to be a part of a service occupation as a major reason for entering law enforcement. Like females, males expressed the salary and job security factor as important but not to the extent females did (Ermer, 1978). Neither males nor females express the stereotypical reasoning of desire to be part of an authoritarian occupation as a driving force in selecting policing as a career. The image of the power-hungry cop as portrayed in many television and



motion picture ventures is erroneously believed to be the norm for "real" police officers. While some individuals may seek policing as a career for the power and authority, this tends to be the exception rather than the rule (Ermer, 1978).

### PERFORMANCE OF FEMALE PATROL OFFICERS

The job performance of female patrol officers has been one of the central issues surrounding the suitability for patrol duties. Dissention from male patrol officers, who frequently view women officers as too weak, emotionally and physically, to cope with the rigors of the job, has been a stumbling block for females (Dreifus, 1980; Bell, 1982). A 1974 Police Foundation study showed this perception was unfounded. The report stated that there are:

"...little differences in the abilities of men and women to deal with violent or potentially violent situations. Women were found to be similar or equal to men in the percentage of arrests they made that resulted in conviction, their attitude toward the public, the number of incidents they were involved in that required backup support from other officers, the number of injuries they sustained on the job, and even the number of accidents they had." (Kinnane, 1979).

These findings counter the stereotypical view of the female patrol officer held by their male counterparts. This leads to the conclusion that the resentment of females in patrol work may not revolve around their lack of performance but rather their actual ability to perform in the position.

Additional studies examining the performance of female police officers have rendered similar findings to those of the Police Foundation. Scrutiny of groups of male and female

officers over a period of time indicated that males and females performed patrol duties in similar ways, responded to similar calls for service, and dealt with similar numbers of drunk, violent and upset persons. No situations encountered cast doubt upon the ability of women to perform the tasks associated with patrol work (Milton, 1978; Sherman, L. J., 1973). A more forceful conclusion in another research project, states that there is no area of patrol work that could be considered beyond the ability of policewomen (Sulton and Townsey, 1981). Of continuing interest, then, is why the opposition to women in patrol work persists.

### ADVANTAGES TO WOMEN IN POLICING

As discussed, female officers in patrol positions continue to create controversy in law enforcement circles. A key consideration becomes the advantages to having women officers in the ranks of the patrol division. Any advantages to the presence of women are often lost in the stereotypes and misconceptions of female officers held by male officers. Yet, research demonstrates that women, far from detracting from the image of the professional police officer, can greatly enhance the perception of professionalism of the police within the community (Block and Anderson, 1974). An improved public image is only one of the advantages to the utilization of female patrol officers.

It is commonly believed that female officers can perform their tasks in a less violent or physically forceful manner than their male counterparts. For example, when female officers were involved in confrontation - type situations, it was observed that less violence occurred in police - citizen encounters than when male officers were involved in similar situations. The presence of females has also tended to generate a reduction in police violence in general (Martin, 1979; Breece & Garrett, 1977). Females tend to focus attention on techniques and strategies that avoid violence and "cool down" violent or potentially violent situations without resorting to the use of force (Sulton and Townsey, 1981).

Male patrol officers often believe that control of the situation must be gained at any cost---often forceful costs. This can serve as the catalyst to move a potentially violent encounter into an actual violent situation. As one author observes:

"If female officers do little more than help male officers to divest their patrol activities of unnecessary and often counter-productive machismo, they will have advanced the profession considerably. A man trying to cope with the pressures of policing does not need the additional pressures of trying to be a 'John Wayne'." (Kinnane, 1979).

Reducing the degree of unnecessary violence used by officers is viewed universally as beneficial to any police agency. If female officers can help generate a more peaceful solution to many situations, then there is a definite advantage to their presence in law enforcement.

The potential reduction of police-generated violence is not the only advantage to the presence of women in policing. Some authorities feel that women officers are more capable of handling and gaining information from victims of crimes, especially sex offenses and juvenile offenses, and that women are generally more thorough in performing a wide range of police patrol responsibilities (Martin, 1979; Breece & Garrett, 1977; Stuart, 1975). Obtaining information from victims and witnesses in crime situations is a very important aspect of the patrol officer's job as a lack of such information may result in crimes remaining unsolved. Female officers demonstrate an ability to solicit vital information from parties involved in criminal events, often times more

successfully than male officers. Women can bring to policing a set of social skills and characteristics that are different from males and of benefit to the police mission.

An additional area of advantages accompanying the presence of females in policing is the utilization of female officers in undercover and detective operations. Often times, a woman officer used in a surveillance operation is dismissed as a passerby by the public or the subject of the investigation (Martin, 1979). With this fact in mind, the presence of female officers can serve to enhance the chances of successful operations in areas such as narcotics investigations. (Stuart, 1975). Naturally, for both female and male officers in covert operations, proper training is essential. Yet, there is no evidence that would support the closure of this aspect of police work to the female officer. It is usually understood, that in order to eventually perform in such investigative positions, both male and female officers must first prove their capabilities in the lower levels of the police agency---the patrol division. Thus the misconceptions of the female officer in the patrol function can carry over to the use of female officers in other areas of police operations as well. This indirectly serves to cut female officers out of any major operations at higher employment levels.

Female officers, then, can bring several beneficial traits and abilities to policing. Yet, many persons find difficulty in accepting women in the line levels of police

agencies. Male officers often have a tendency to be overly-protective of female colleagues in patrol positions. Commonly the morale of male officers decreases when females are placed in the ranks of the patrol officers (Breece & Garrett, 1975). Resocialization efforts designed to assist male officers in accepting female patrol officers becomes crucial at this point. Such attempts to introduce female officers in the patrol ranks are important not only for the success of female officers but also for the general effectiveness of the department and for the safety of all officers in general (Schultz, 1978; Meers, 1979).

### CONCLUSION

The presence of women in law enforcement has been and will continue to be a controversial topic for many years. It is a subject that is quite emotional to persons within the law enforcement community and to society in general. The issues associated with women in policing will probably escalate with female officers stepping out of the traditional police role of being guardians of morals and young people. Bitterness and resentment towards females on the part of male officers has been allowed to fester within police agencies and this has created a situation of less than ideal working relationships between the sexes. Such an atmosphere creates a less than desirable environment for administrative decisions concerning the employment and assignment of females. Administrators face charges of sexism if they do not properly utilize females and charges of preferential treatment from male officers if females are given the full range of opportunities within policing. Women in the ranks of patrol officers are a major change in most police agencies. The primary effects of this change:

"will be felt not by policy makers, police officials, or the public but by rank and file police officers, male and female, whose ability to learn to work together will determine whether the change is successful." (Milton, 1974).



There are many assets surrounding the employment of women in the patrol aspect of policing but whether these assets are fully and completely utilized will be left up to the individual officers and their ability to form working relationships without hostility. These relationships will in turn be a major determining factor of the success of the department itself as a whole.

### III. METHODOLOGY

## METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to determine if there are meaningful differences in the reasons for the selection of policing as a career on the part of male and female police officers. Accordingly, this research will focus on the personal reasons officers made their career selections, the perceived reasons men enter policing as a career and the perceived reasons women enter policing as a career.

There are, then three basic questions that this research seeks to answer. These questions are:

1. Do the expressed reasons for the selection of policing as a career systematically vary according to the sex of the officer respondent?
2. Do the perceived reasons men select policing as a career systematically vary according to the sex of the officer respondent?
3. Do the perceived reasons women select policing as a career systematically vary according to the sex of the officer respondent?

### SURVEY INSTRUMENT

To respond to these three inquiries, this research employed a survey research format. Based upon the review of the literature, a questionnaire was developed allowing selected respondents to express their personal reasons for the selection of policing as a career and to express their perceived reasons why men and women, in general, select policing as a career. The questionnaire utilized in this research is contained in Appendix A.

The structure of the survey instrument, employed Likert Scale asking officers their degree of agreement or disagreement with 11 statements regarding their personal reasons for selection of policing as a career, 11 statements regarding perceived reasons men choose policing as a career, and 11 statements regarding perceived reasons women choose policing as a career. For each section of the instrument, officers were posed with one of the following statements:

"I entered policing due to..."

"MEN enter policing due to..."

"WOMEN enter policing due to..."

Following these statements were the below listed reasons for the selection of policing as a career:

"...the excitement of the job."

"...the opportunity to help people."

"...the security of the job."

"...the chance to fight crime."

"...the prestige of the occupation."

"...the salary and fringe benefits of the job."

"...a relative or close friend being a police officer."

"...the authority and power associated with the job."

"...a lifetime interest in law enforcement."

"...the lack of other job opportunities."

"...the desire to be a part of a male dominated profession."

This format then presented the officer respondents with 33 statements to which they indicated agreement or disagreement according to the following five point scale:

1 strongly disagree

2 disagree

3 undecided

4 agree

5 strongly agree.

Following this section of the instrument were general inquiries into the background and personal characteristics of the respondents.

### SAMPLE

As this research focuses on the comparison of the responses of both male and female officers, the sample drawn for the administration of the survey instrument represents a purposive sample. Two police agencies in Indiana were identified as possible sources of respondents and both agencies agreed to cooperate in the project. For purposes of developing a sufficiently large number of respondents, it was decided that all female officers in the two agencies would be included in the sample. This intentional sampling is necessitated due to the relatively small number of female officers in policing. As a result, 26 female officers were identified in the two agencies. It was then decided that approximately twice the number of female officers would be randomly drawn from the compliment of male officers employed by the two agencies. Despite the desirability of a randomly drawn sample, it was decided that this procedure of sampling was the only means of generating a data base amenable to statistical analysis.

Officers were identified by name and a packet containing the survey instrument, a cover letter, and a return envelope was addressed to each officer. These packets were then delivered to each by means of the intro-departmental mail of

the two police agencies. It was decided that a two week period would be allowed for the return of instruments by respondents. At the end of the two week period, coding and analysis of the returns would commence.

The sample yeilded a return rate of 60.3 percent, a figure that represents a "good return rate" and one that is then capable of being analyzed using the statistical techniques necessitated by the research (Babbie, 1973). Specifically, 18 of the 26 female officers in the sample (69.2%) responded to the survey and 29 of the 52 male officers (55.8%) responded to the survey.

### STATISTICAL PROCEDURES

Analysis of the returned instruments was accomplished via use of the statistical software package SPSS-X (Statistical Procedures for the Social Sciences, version 10). Univariate analysis was conducted of all responses and the personal characteristics of respondents. To determine if there were meaningful or systematic differences among the responses of male and female officers, the research utilized the non-parametric statistical procedure of Kruskal-Wallis one way analysis of variance with Chi Square being corrected for ties in the ranking process, as the test of significance for reported data. This statistical procedure was appropriate in light of the fact that the Likert Scale employed to gauge the extent of agreement or disagreement to the various reasons for selection of careers was ordinal in nature.



#### IV FINDINGS

### CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Table 1 shows information surrounding general characteristics of all respondents to the survey instrument. Areas of concern here were the ages of all respondents, their ethnic classification, their level of education, and the number of years of police experience they possessed. Each area was then compared in terms of male or female respondents.

The median age of all respondents was 34 years of age. Males were slightly over the median age at 35 years of age while females were at 32 years of age. This indicates that females tend to be younger than their male counterparts which could also be related to their recent entrance into the profession.

The vast majority of respondents were whites (85.1%) with approximately 9% being black and 6% being hispanic. This could lead a person to believe that equal employment exists mainly on paper rather than with in actual police departments. The extreme percentage of these differences helps to illustrate this fact.

Education was an area where both males and females exhibited little differences. Each group had a median educational level of 14 years of schooling. This indicated that officers have attended at least two years of education past the high school level either at a college, vocational or technical school.

The examination of police experience showed meaningful differences between males and females in the number of years each had in the profession. While the overall median level of experience was 9.3 years, males possessed experiential levels of 11.0 years as compared to female officers who possessed a median level of 3.6 years. Mean levels of experience revealed figures of 11.4 years for males and 5.4 years for females. These are definitely extreme differences. The recent entrance of females into policing as a career, however, undoubtedly plays a major part in these findings.

TABLE 1  
Characteristics of Respondents

<u>AGE (years)</u>			
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Median	35.0	32.0	34.0
Mean	35.6	32.7	34.5
<u>ETHNIC CLASSIFICATION n (%)</u>			
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Black	1( 3.4)	3(16.7)	4( 8.5)
Caucasian	26(89.7)	14(77.8)	40(85.1)
Spanish Surname	2( 6.9)	1( 5.6)	3( 6.4)
<u>EDUCATIONAL LEVEL n (%) (years)</u>			
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
12	6(20.7)	5(27.8)	11(23.4)
13	1( 3.4)	3(16.7)	4( 8.5)
14	8(27.6)	4(22.2)	12(25.5)
15	4(13.8)	-----	4( 8.5)
16	7(24.1)	3(16.7)	10(21.3)
17	2( 6.9)	3(16.7)	5(10.6)
18	-----	-----	-----
19	1( 3.4)	-----	1( 2.1)
Median	14.0	14.0	14.0
Mean	14.6	14.1	14.4
<u>POLICE EXPERIENCE ( years)</u>			
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Median	11.0	3.6	9.3
Mean	11.4	5.4	9.1

PERSONAL REASONS FOR CHOOSING  
A CAREER IN POLICING

Table 2 illustrates different reasons individuals choose to go into policing. Personal reasons were examined as to why each individual officer chose a career in the police profession. Males and Females were evaluated in terms of their level of agreement or disagreement to each of the eleven motivational factors.

Male respondents generally agreed that job excitement, the opportunity to help people, job security, fighting crime, and the job prestige were all reasons which influenced their entering policing. They tended to disagree that salary, a friend or relative in the field, the authority and power associated with the job, no other job opportunities, and the male dominated occupation status had any major impact upon their career choice. A median level of 'undecided' was revealed by males regarding the influence of a lifetime interest in policing on their career choice. Examination of the figures in Table 2 illustrates a higher level of agreement than disagreement, however.

In comparison, female respondents generally agreed that job excitement, the opportunity to help people, job security, fighting crime, job prestige, salary, and a lifetime interest in policing all were reasons influencing their choices of a career in policing. Females disagreed with a friend or

relative in the field, the power and authority associated with the job, no other job opportunities, and the male dominated occupation status as having any major impact upon their choices of a career in policing. (See Table 2 - page 36).

TABLE 2  
 Stated Personal Reasons Officers  
 Choose Policing as a Career  
 By Sex  
 (Percentage Distribution)

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
EXCITEMENT OF JOB						
	Male	6.9	66.9	3.4	20.7	----
	Female	11.1	66.7	5.6	16.7	----
HELP PEOPLE						
	Male	34.5	48.2	10.3	6.9	----
	Female	55.6	33.3	----	11.1	----
JOB SECURITY						
	Male	20.7	72.4	3.4	3.4	----
	Female	27.8	55.6	11.1	----	5.6
FIGHT CRIME						
	Male	20.7	69.0	6.9	3.4	----
	Female	5.6	61.1	16.7	16.7	----
PRESTIGE OF JOB						
	Male	10.3	51.7	10.3	27.6	----
	Female	5.6	50.0	11.1	27.8	5.6
SALARY/BENEFITS						
	Male	----	24.1	17.2	44.8	13.8
	Female	5.6	44.4	5.6	33.3	11.1
FRIEND/RELATIVE						
	Male	----	20.7	6.9	58.6	12.8
	Female	----	22.2	5.6	50.5	22.2
AUTHORITY/POWER						
	Male	----	20.7	13.8	58.6	6.9
	Female	----	11.1	----	77.8	11.1
LIFETIME INTEREST						
	Male	24.1	24.1	24.1	20.7	6.9
	Female	11.1	50.0	5.6	16.7	16.7
NO JOB OPPORTUNITIES						
	Male	3.4	6.9	----	55.2	34.5
	Female	----	5.6	5.6	38.9	50.0
MALE OCCUPATION						
	Male	----	3.4	----	44.8	51.7
	Female	----	5.6	5.6	38.9	50.0

PERCEIVED REASONS FOR MEN CHOOSING  
A CAREER IN POLICING

Table 3 examines the perceived reasons males are generally seen as having when they choose a career in policing. Both males and females were asked to express their ideas and opinions in this area.

Male respondents agreed that men tend to choose a career in policing because of the job excitement, job security, helping others, fighting crime, prestige of the job, and the authority and power associated with the job. Males tended to disagree that no other job opportunities and the male dominated nature of the profession had any type of major impact upon men choosing policing as a career. While a median indicator of undecided exists, males appear to disagree that salary and benefits influence men in choosing policing as a career. Males tend to lean toward agreement that friends or relatives in the profession as well as a life time interest in policing have positive influences on men choosing policing as a career.

When assessing reasons why their male counterparts chose policing as a career, female officers tended to agree that excitement of the job, helping people, job security, fighting crime, job prestige, and the power and authority associated

with the job were reasons which had positive influences on males entering the profession. Females did not totally disagree with any of the proposed motivational factors.

While a median level indicator of 'undecided' was demonstrated, female respondents leaned in favor of agreement with a friend or relative in the field, a lifetime interest in policing, and a male dominated occupation status as being positive influence on their male counterparts entering policing. They tended to lean towards disagreement that no other job alternatives influenced males to choose policing as a career. They also demonstrated an 'undecided' level concerning salary as an influential factor to males entering policing. (See Table 3, page 39).



TABLE 3  
Perceived Reasons Men Choose  
Policing as a Career  
(Percentage Distribution)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
EXCITEMENT OF JOB					
Male	6.9	82.8	6.9	3.4	----
Female	22.2	66.7	5.6	----	5.6
HELP PEOPLE					
Male	7.1	67.9	10.7	14.3	----
Female	5.6	44.4	27.8	22.2	----
JOB SECURITY					
Male	10.3	82.8	6.9	----	----
Female	16.7	72.2	5.6	5.6	----
FIGHT CRIME					
Male	13.8	72.4	13.8	----	----
Female	16.7	61.1	16.7	5.6	----
PRESTIGE OF JOB					
Male	----	27.6	24.1	41.4	6.9
Female	22.2	61.1	16.7	----	----
SALARY/BENEFITS					
Male	----	27.6	24.1	41.4	6.9
Female	11.1	27.8	44.4	5.6	11.1
FRIEND/RELATIVE					
Male	3.4	31.0	41.4	24.1	----
Female	5.6	33.3	44.4	16.7	----
AUTHORITY/POWER					
Male	6.9	51.7	24.1	17.2	----
Female	22.2	61.1	11.1	5.6	----
LIFETIME INTEREST					
Male	10.3	31.0	41.4	17.2	----
Female	----	44.4	44.4	11.1	----
NO JOB OPPORTUNITIES					
Male	----	13.8	20.7	58.6	6.9
Female	----	22.2	33.3	38.9	5.6
MALE OCCUPATION					
Male	----	3.4	27.6	48.3	20.7
Female	11.1	33.3	27.8	27.8	----

PERCEIVED REASONS FOR WOMEN CHOOSING  
A CAREER IN POLICING

Finally, Table 4 examines the perceived reasons females are generally seen as having when they choose a career in policing. Males and females were both once again asked to express their ideas and opinions in this area.

When asked to examine reasons why their female counterparts choose policing as a career male officers tended to agree that job excitement, helping people, job security, fighting crime, job prestige, and salary and benefits were positive influential factors for females entering the profession. They disagreed that females would enter the profession because a friend or relative was already working in the field.

While a median level indicator of "undecided" was demonstrated, males tended to lean towards disagreement with women entering the profession because of the authority and power of the job, any lifetime interest in policing, or no other job alternatives present. Males did remain "undecided" in the reason of a male dominated occupation being a motivational factor to women entering the profession.

Female respondents agreed that women tend to choose policing as a career because of the excitement of the job, helping people, the job security, fighting crime, prestige of the occupation, and salary. Females disagreed with the

ideas that a friend or relative in the profession, the authority and power associated with the job, no other job opportunities, or the male dominated nature of the profession had any major impact upon women choosing policing as a career. The only area where females reported to being "undecided" was that of a lifetime interest in policing having an effect upon women entering law enforcement. (See Table 4, page 42).

TABLE 4  
Perceived Reasons Women Choose  
Policing as a Career  
By Sex  
(Percentage Distribution)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
EXCITEMENT OF JOB					
Male	10.7	60.7	10.7	17.9	----
Female	11.1	72.2	11.1	5.6	----
HELP PEOPLE					
Male	28.6	67.9	3.6	----	----
Female	44.4	55.6	----	----	----
JOB SECURITY					
Male	10.7	78.6	7.1	3.6	----
Female	16.7	77.8	5.6	----	----
FIGHT CRIME					
Male	14.3	53.6	17.9	14.3	----
Female	----	61.1	33.3	5.6	----
PRESTIGE OF JOB					
Male	10.7	46.4	25.0	17.9	----
Female	----	55.6	22.2	22.2	----
SALARY/BENEFITS					
Male	17.9	53.6	28.6	----	----
Female	5.6	61.1	22.2	5.6	5.6
FRIEND/RELATIVE					
Male	----	7.1	32.1	57.1	3.6
Female	----	11.1	33.3	50.0	5.6
AUTHORITY/POWER					
Male	7.1	35.7	32.1	21.4	3.6
Female	----	22.2	22.2	50.0	5.6
LIFETIME INTEREST					
Male	7.1	14.3	35.7	39.3	3.6
Female	----	33.3	44.4	22.2	----
NO JOB OPPORTUNITIES					
Male	3.6	28.6	21.4	35.7	10.7
Female	5.6	22.2	22.2	44.4	5.6
MALE OCCUPATION					
Male	7.2	28.6	17.9	25.0	21.4
Female	----	27.8	11.1	50.0	11.1

A COMPARISON OF MALE AND FEMALE  
REASONS FOR CHOOSING A  
CAREER IN POLICING

Previous discussion in this research focussed on the distribution of responses of male and female officers. Of interest in this research is whether there is any meaningful variation in the responses of male and female officers being surveyed. This section of the study will focus on personal reasons officers choose policing, the perceived reasons for entering policing of males and the perceived reasons for entering policing by females for both groups. Comparisons in these three areas was conducted to examine any meaningful convergence or divergence in reasons for and by both males and females in the profession. As was discussed in the methodology section, Kruskal-Wallis Analysis of Variance was employed to detect each variations. Chi Square, which was corrected for ties in the ranking process, served as the test of significance for this section.

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA was presented in Table 5. Review of these data indicated that for the majority of reasons considered for males and females personally entering policing, there was no demonstrated systematic variation in the level of agreement-disagreement as to the influence of the motivational factors on choosing a career in policing. This lack of significant variation is meaningful,

however. It illustrates that males and females tend to enter policing for many of the same reasons. One area was seen as showing a meaningful variation between males and females, however is evidenced in Table 5. This in and of itself goes against previous beliefs which exhibited males and females as entering policing for very different reasons.

In the area of personal reasons for entering policing, of the 11 factors considered, "fighting crime" emerged as a significantly varying reason for males and females entering the profession. Based upon the total ranks associated with this factor, one can conclude that male officers systematically indicate a higher level of agreement with this factor influencing them in their choice of a career. This is borne out by reference to Table 2 in which 89.7 percent of male officers agreed or strongly agreed that this item had a positive influence upon their career choice, while 66.7 percent of females indicated a similar response. Conversely, only 3.4 percent of males disagreed with this factor while in comparison, 16.7 percent of females disagreed with this factors influence upon their career choice.

In assessing reasons men , in general, choose a career in policing, male and female respondents systematically varied in their reported level of agreement with three out of eleven factors. First, female respondents more strongly agree that prestige of the job was a factor influencing their male counterparts choice of a career. Referring to Table 3, 83.3% of females agreed while only 69% of males agreed with this issue.

It should be noted that no females disagreed with this motivational factor having an influence upon their male counterparts.

Second, regarding the influence of authority and power, female respondents significantly differed from males in terms of their level of agreement with this factors influence upon a career choice. Females listed authority and power as a more influential reason for males entering policing than men did themselves. While 83.3% of females agreed or strongly agreed with this issue only 58.6% of males agreed or strongly agreed that this factor had a positive influence upon their entrance into policing.

Third, regarding agreement that being a part of a male dominated occupation influenced a career choice, females indicated a more positive belief that this issue had a more significant impact upon a career choice in policing for males than did the men themselves. Females agreed strongly in 44.1% of their responses with this issue where as only 3.4% of males merely agreed (no males strongly agreed). Interestingly, 70% of male respondents disagreed with this issue while only 27.8% of females disagreed that this factor had an influence upon males entering a career in policing.

Reviewing the perceived reasons for females choosing a career in policing, one factor varied significantly when comparing male and female responses. This factor, authority and power, indicated that males more strongly agree that this issue has a positive influence upon a career choice in policing by women. Table 4 indicates 42.8% of men agree while

only 22.2% of women agree with this factor and its influence upon women. Conversely 55.6% of women are shown as disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this issue while 25.0% of men are shown as responding with disagree or strongly disagree.

A final point of interest revolves around the issue of power and authority. While men perceive this factor as a major positive influence over the career choice of both males and females, they do not list this factor as a personal reason for their entrance into policing. Similar findings can be seen with females. Male responses of agreement or strongly agree for their personal entrance into policing gave figures of 20.7%. In contrast, perceived reasons for male entrances resulted in returns of 58.3% and 42.8% for perceived entrance of women into policing. Female respondents in the area of personal entrance into policing agreed or strongly agreed at a rate of 11.1%. Their responses for perceived entrance of males entering policing resulted in 83.3% agree or strongly agree. Perceived reasons for female entrance did not vary as greatly but still resulted in 22.2% of female respondents answering with agree or strongly agree. (See Table 5, page 47).



TABLE 5  
Kruskal-Wallis Analysis of Variance of  
Reasons for Choosing a Police Career  
By Sex

	Total Male	Ranks Female	Chi Square	p
<u>PERSONAL REASONS</u>				
Excitement of Job	23.5	24.8	0.15	.70
Help People	22.2	26.9	1.59	.21
Job Security	24.1	23.8	0.01	.94
*Fight Crime	26.9	19.3	4.83	.03
Prestige of Job	25.0	22.4	0.44	.50
Salary/Benefits	22.0	27.3	1.83	.18
Friend/Relative	24.5	23.2	0.12	.73
Authority/Power	26.1	20.7	2.44	.12
Lifetime Interest	24.5	23.2	0.10	.75
No Job Opportunities	25.3	21.9	0.80	.37
Male Occupation	23.5	24.8	0.11	.74
<u>REASONS MEN CHOOSE POLICING</u>				
Excitement of Job	22.9	25.8	0.95	.33
Help People	25.6	20.3	2.13	.14
Job Security	23.8	24.3	0.02	.89
Fight Crime	24.5	23.2	0.15	.70
*Prestige of Job	21.2	28.6	4.56	.03
Salary/Benefits	21.5	28.0	2.68	.10
Friend/Relative	23.2	25.3	0.29	.59
*Authority/Power	21.1	28.7	4.22	.04
Lifetime Interest	23.9	24.2	0.01	.93
No Job Opportunities	22.2	27.0	1.62	.20
**Male Occupation	18.7	32.5	12.35	.00
<u>REASONS WOMEN CHOOSE POLICING</u>				
Excitement of Job	22.4	25.2	0.68	.41
Help People	21.9	26.0	1.45	.23
Job Security	22.6	24.8	0.56	.45
Fight Crime	24.6	21.9	0.55	.46
Prestige of Job	24.3	22.2	0.31	.58
Salary/Benefits	24.2	22.4	0.25	.62
Friend/Relative	23.1	24.2	0.10	.75
*Authority/Power	26.6	18.8	4.05	.04
Lifetime Interest	21.6	26.5	1.65	.20
No Job Opportunities	23.6	23.3	0.01	.94
Male Occupation	24.2	22.4	0.21	.65

\*Chi Square significant at .05 alpha level

\*\*Chi Square significant at .01 alpha level

Note: Chi Square has been corrected for ties in the ranking process.

## V. CONCLUSION

## CONCLUSION

Policing, as an occupation, holds many different individuals as a part of its working realm. The experiences of each of these individuals are as varied as the individuals are themselves. It is these individuals which make up the life blood of the law enforcement profession.

This study has attempted to look at police officers working in the field today and compare their personal reasons for entering policing as a career. An examination was made as to the perceived reasons these same officers have for both males and females entering policing. Finally, a comparison of these perceptions was made in terms of how males and females view each other in terms of their perceived reasons for entering the profession.

For the most part, males and females tended to agree more than disagree in reasons for their personal entrance into policing. Both saw job excitement, helping people, job security, fighting crime, and job prestige as major positive influences on their choosing policing as a career. Salary and a lifetime interest in law enforcement were also expressed as positive influences on females but not as much so for males. Males and females also agreed that the presence of a friend or family member in policing, the power and authority associated with the job, no other job alternatives, and the male dominated nature of the occupation

had little influence upon them choosing policing as a career. These findings show males and females with few differences in their reasons for entering policing. Past stereotypes and misconceptions are not held up by the research in that each group enters the profession for very different reasons. These similarities are significant then in showing males and females are in the policing profession to do a similar job or service for the community.

It is interesting to note that in terms of a response of agree or strongly agree, for female respondents the opportunity to help people and job security were the most important motivational factors for their personal entrance into policing. In comparison, responses of agree or strongly agree by males revealed that men see job security and the opportunity to fight crime as the most important motivational factors for their personal entrance into policing. Females enter policing to help others while males enter policing to fight crime. Both feel job security is important and perhaps the reasoning behind their remaining in the profession.

Perceived reasons for men entering policing were also agreed upon by males and females in 8 out of 10 categories examined. However, women saw men as entering policing for the job prestige, authority, and the male dominated nature of the profession more so than their male counterparts. This possibly shows females perceiving men as entering policing for more of the characteristics of the profession rather than the tasks involved with the profession itself.

An area of interest appears when an examination of personal and perceived reasons for entering policing is conducted. Power and authority is an area which both male and females listed as having a meaningful influence on individuals entering policing. Yet, this reason was not viewed as having a major influence upon the respondents personal reasons for entering the profession. In fact, over half disagreed with the issue as affecting their decision to enter policing. While members of the opposite sex agreed that power and authority was of influential factor in entering policing neither viewed it as a positive influential factor for their personal entrance into the profession. This tends to uphold the traditional image of the "hard-nose" cop for males and the image of women "forcefully" trying to enter the male profession.

In summary, the study showed many similarities in the reasons men and women enter a career in policing. Additional similarities were found in perceived reasons for males and females entering the profession. The old belief that men and women enter for very different reasons was not upheld. Continued study in the area will assist in further clarifying the issue and perhaps aid in the better development of working relationships within a department.

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## VII APPENDIX A



# BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MUNCIE, INDIANA 47306

COLLEGE OF SCIENCES & HUMANITIES  
Department of Criminal Justice & Criminology



Dear Officer:

We are asking your cooperation and support in looking at the reasons officers choose policing as a career. Attached please find a questionnaire entitled "Police Officer Perceptions of Factors Influencing Career Choices" and a return envelope.

It is hoped that you will take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire and drop it in the mail. We have found that only 5 to 8 minutes are needed to complete the questionnaire. All that is needed is for you to check the appropriate box that corresponds to your feelings about each particular item. If you wish to provide additional comments, the survey form has a space for this.

Realizing that requests like this are frequently made, please take a few moments of your time and complete the questionnaire. We do value your input and your responses are needed for the successful completion of the project.

Our assurances are offered that all responses will be treated with the utmost respect for confidentiality.

If you would like to know of the results of the project, please contact us and when the analysis of the results is completed, we will forward the information to you.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Respectfully,

Steve Meagher, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor

Nancy Yentes  
Research Fellow